United Nations E/CN.18/2007/4/Add.4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 February 2007

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Seventh session
New York, 16-27 April 2007
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Discussion paper contributed by the scientific and technological communities major group**

Summary

The present discussion paper is a contribution by two networks of forestry research institutions in Africa and Asia, in consultation with the International Union of Forest Research Organizations.

The paper:

(a) Briefly describes the networks, which provided the materials for the development of the paper;

(b) Assesses priority areas for action, with a focus on the most pressing issues which need urgent action, and on how future international arrangements could better address them;

(c) Assesses how the United Nations Forum on Forests process contributes to and influences the discussion of issues of priority for the scientific and technological communities major group, focusing on the global, regional and subregional activities and programmes directly or indirectly contributing to the guiding principles of the Forum on Forests;

(d) Recommends a number of science and technology-related elements for the non-legally binding instrument on forests;

* E/CN.18/2007/1.

** The present discussion paper is a contribution by the scientific and technological communities major group to the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. It has been prepared on the basis of information gathered by the Forestry Research Network for Sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions, in collaboration with the International Union of Forest Research Organizations.

07-22793 (E) 090207

(e) Recommends modalities for the multi-year programme of work;

(f) Provides concluding remarks and a summary of major recommendations for the effective contribution of science-policy linkages to sustainable forest management.

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I. Introduction

1. The present discussion paper is a contribution prepared by the Forestry Research Network for Sub-Saharan Africa (FORNESSA) and the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions (APAFRI) on behalf of the scientific and technological communities major group, to the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. It benefited from review comments by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO).

2. FORNESSA is a federation of three subregional forestry research networks: the Association of Forestry Research Institutions in Eastern Africa; the Forestry and Agro-forestry Research Network of the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development; and the Forestry Research and Training Unit of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Directorate within the Southern African Development Community secretariat. Its goal is to strengthen forestry research in sub-Saharan Africa to ensure a greater impact on the management and conservation of forest and tree resources for sustainable development.

3. APAFRI is a non-governmental organization with over 60 members. Most of the national forest research institutions, and many of the forestry schools, in Asia and the Pacific which are actively engaged in forestry and forest-related research are members of APAFRI. Its vision is to be recognized as a dynamic, strong and self-reliant forestry research association in Asia and the Pacific which promotes innovative research and development efforts in support of national, regional and community developments. APAFRI is also a chapter of IUFRO, and has collaborated in various activities with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, the United States Department of Agriculture and other regional and international agencies.

4. The paper assesses (a) the most pressing science and technology-related issues that need to be urgently addressed in order to enhance sustainable forest management and meet the four global objectives on forests agreed upon during the sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests; and (b) how the United Nations Forum on Forests process has contributed to a wider understanding of those issues and helped to address them. The paper also makes recommendations for a comprehensive and more effective non-legally binding instrument on all types of forest, and also for enhancing the organization of the work of the Forum on Forests from the present until 2015.

II. Priority areas for action

5. This section assesses the most pressing science and technology-related problems that need urgent attention in order to enhance sustainable forest management and meet the four agreed global objectives on forests. It also suggests ways the United Nations Forum on Forests could address those problems.

A. Enhancing the interface of forest science and forest policy

6. The scientific and technological communities major group would like to emphasize that enhancing the science-policy interface is key to sustainable forest management and to the successful implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and to the implementation of the various resolutions and decisions of the United Nations Forum on Forests, as well as the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the four global objectives agreed and negotiated during the sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

7. Consequently, the scientific and technological communities major group wishes to see more concerted efforts and commitment by Governments, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional networks, and relevant multilateral environmental agreements, instruments, processes and bodies of the United Nations system, to recognize and strengthen the research-policy linkage by:

(a) Increasing support for sound scientific knowledge generation, and the development and adaptation of forest technologies;

(b) Improving information access, and enhancing the sharing and exchange of experiences and knowledge, including traditional knowledge and good practices in forest resources utilization, conservation and management;

(c) Strengthening forestry education and training, as well as research and development;

(d) Strengthening the capacity of scientists and research organizations from developing countries to participate effectively in joint initiatives and activities of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in science and technology in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests and other international forest forums and processes;

(e) Promoting appropriate mechanisms for greater participation of forest stakeholder groups, including the scientific community, the private sector and civil society organizations, in the formulation and implementation of forest policies and best practices, and of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

B. Enhancing the transformation of research results into usable information and technologies and facilitating their greater extension and adoption

8. The second key priority area for action for the scientific and technological communities major group relates to transforming research results into usable information and technologies which could increase the impact of sound scientific information on forest policy and the sustainable management of forests for greater value to society and wealth creation. It is one thing to generate scientific information but it is another thing altogether to transform research findings into usable knowledge and technologies and place those technologies in the hands of policymakers and other forest stakeholders. If forests and other related natural

resources are to be saved, they must be highly valued by forest stakeholders, including forest-dependent communities, landowners, forest practitioners and policy decision makers. That is even more important in developing countries, where the fight for sustainable forest management is most often undertaken against the background of a pressing need for economic development, external debt repayment, and improvement in human development indices. The scientific and technological communities major group recognizes that research needs to demonstrate even more clearly the usefulness of forests and forest resources and communicate research findings appropriately and effectively to end-users in more convincing ways. To that end, United Nations Forum on Forests actions in the following directions could be extremely helpful:

(a) Organization of training workshops on how to plan, conduct and organize research activities so that research results can be transformed more readily into usable problem-solving and policymaking instruments;

(b) Organization of communication and interaction programmes (extension services) for a better flow of scientific information among researchers, policymakers and forest practitioners and managers;

(c) Development of mechanisms to better associate as many as possible relevant stakeholders in research-policy formulation and implementation processes to avoid conflicts and antagonism between the State forestry apparatus and the citizenry, and to improve good governance, transparency and accountability in the forest sector.

C. Coordinating and streamlining national, subregional and regional development priorities with internationally agreed global objectives on forests

9. Another key priority area for action for the scientific and technological communities major group is how to harmonize national, subregional and regional priorities and strategies with internationally agreed global objectives and resolutions. That is a challenging area, as national priorities and strategies are not always in line with global objectives, which tend to be more in favour of conservation than utilization. The key to achieving such harmonization is to avoid setting conservation against utilization, in favour of the concept of sustainable conservation and utilization of forests and forest resources, which aims to achieve a balance between conservation and use of resources.

10. To that end, the United Nations Forum on Forests could endeavour to:

(a) Develop a programme of action, aimed at demonstrating clearly the opportunities embedded in the different forest-related conventions and agreements for developing countries to implement them more easily. Outstanding examples of these are the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the clean development mechanism whose opportunities for developing countries that fully implement them are not always well understood;

(b) Encourage national, subregional and regional collaboration in the pursuit of projects of common interest and the pooling of resources and capacities to that

end, in partnership with international institutions and Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations.

D. Mobilization of adequate funding for forestry research, education and extension

11. A fourth important priority area for action is the mobilization of adequate funding for forest research, education and extension, especially and most urgently in developing countries. Indeed, most reports from sub-Saharan African countries on poor progress in the implementation of international conventions and arrangements on forests, such as the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, have indicated that a persistent lack of funding lies at the heart of the lack of progress. Africa is a continent defined by poverty. Its richness, based on the relative abundance of its natural resources, will remain unrealized as long as economic, social and environmental benefits are not derived from them to improve the livelihood of its large forest-dependent populations. The continent is home to over 50 per cent of the highly indebted poor countries of the world. How can they enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people, if they lack the capital base necessary to initiate and sustain livelihood-improvement programmes and policies? How can they reverse substantively the loss of forest cover through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation, if the necessary funding is not available on a sustainable basis over a long enough period? Far-reaching actions and initiatives to promote sustainable forest management require substantial and long-term investments. To achieve that, efforts by the United Nations Forum on Forests and the international community could be helpful in:

(a) Seriously looking for ways to reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management and mobilizing significant, and increased, new and additional financing from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management, as clearly stated in the fourth global objective agreed during the sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests;

(b) Giving serious thought to the conventional project-based approach used to achieve conservation impacts and livelihood improvement. Project-based interventions are limited in time, space and number of beneficiaries, while most forest cover loss is the result of the land- and resource-use practices of large numbers of people distributed over large areas and acting over a long period of time. A paradigm shift from using short-term instruments to using non-project models in addressing long-term problems is urgently needed.

III. Brief assessment of how the United Nations Forum on Forests process has addressed issues of priority for the scientific and technological communities major group

12. The Secretary-General's report for the fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests on forest-related scientific knowledge observed that progress in

the area had been made at the international level, but the degree of interaction and the extent to which forest-related scientific knowledge was used for policymaking varied considerably among countries and tended to be low, in particular in developing countries. The observation remains largely valid today.

13. Indeed, at the global level, in line with the United Nations Forum on Forests process and its recommendations, several innovative initiatives have been established in recent years to facilitate communication among scientists, policymakers and other stakeholders with a view to improving science-policy interaction. Such initiatives include: (a) intergovernmental forums and subsidiary advisory bodies; (b) task-oriented expert groups set up by forest-related global conventions, instruments and organizations; (c) the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; (d) multi-stakeholder dialogues; and (e) increased cooperation among the scientific community and international organizations, leading to key informative publications, such as the FAO *State of the World's Forests* report, and the International Tropical Timber Organization criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

14. Likewise, at the regional and subregional levels, many regional and international organizations and agencies have launched and implemented various initiatives, which directly or indirectly address the issues of generating, disseminating and utilizing forest-related knowledge, as illustrated by the examples set out below.

A. Enhanced interaction between science and policy

15. The IUFRO Task Force on the Forest Science-Policy Interface has produced guidelines for research organizations and research scientists, providing best practices for the interaction between the science community and policymakers.

16. The IUFRO Special Programme for Developing Countries has also initiated a training module for forest scientists on international forest-related initiatives and agreements and their implementation in the context of national forest programmes which links research and science with practice.

17. The IUFRO Task Force on Public Relations in Forest Science has produced a public relations manual that will be used in another new IUFRO Special Programme for Developing Countries training module to be entitled "Communicating forest research — Making science work for policy and management".

18. The IUFRO Special Project on world forests, society and environment compiled a book on forests in the global balance and a policy brief which was discussed at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

19. The Centre for International Forestry Research has carried out work on forests and governance and recently launched an initiative entitled the "Rights and resources initiative", in partnership with the World Conservation Union, the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry and a number of non-governmental organizations.

B. Initiatives to promote the efficient sharing of information and to strengthen networks

20. IUFRO has established the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) as a Collaborative Partnership on Forests initiative. The service is operated by IUFRO, FAO, the Centre for International Forestry Research and other national and international forestry expert institutions. The GFIS Africa project has established five GFIS service centres strategically located throughout the ecological zones of the continent, while in Asia, the GFIS project is being developed with the active participation of such regional networks as APAFRI.

21. CIFOR has established a carbon forestry website to serve the communities working on land use, land use change and forestry activities and the associated climate change.

22. IUFRO and other partners such as the International Foundation of Sciences and the Forestry Research Network for Sub-Saharan Africa, have organized periodic training courses in research management, proposal preparation and information management, to strengthen capacity for research and for the mobilization of funding for research.

C. Further implementation of international arrangements on forests

23. The FAO regional forestry commissions, the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission and the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission have played a positive role. They recommended that member countries take further actions to implement internationally agreed action related to forests, especially the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, and institute programmes to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. They further recommended that FAO help to convene regional meetings for member countries to exchange experiences in working towards sustainable forest management, including successes and impediments, and make useful recommendations to the Committee on Forests and the United Nations Forum on Forests.

24. Those Commissions also recommended that member countries actively participate and provide forestry expertise in intergovernmental negotiations related to forests, especially as regards the United Nations Forum on Forests and the conventions on biodiversity, desertification and climate change.

D. Strengthened regional and subregional collaboration between countries

25. A number of regional and subregional partnership initiatives emerged in recent years to create platforms for coordination and consultation between countries and donor agencies and development partner countries. The New Partnership for Africa's Development is one example at the regional level, while the Conférence sur les écosystemes de forêts denses humides d'Afrique centrale, born out of the Brazzaville Process, and the conférence des ministres en charge des forêts d'Afrique centrale, formed following the 1999 summit, held in Yaoundé, and which

contributes to the harmonization of national forest policies and actions, are but two outstanding examples at subregional level in the Congo Basin, the second largest contiguous tract of tropical forest in the world. In Asia and the Pacific, the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme, with the participation of 14 Asian and Pacific nations, has achieved much progress in sharing information and exchanging experiences in the conservation and management of forest genetic resources. The programme, initiated by APAFRI and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (recently renamed Bioversity International) has been further boosted by funding from the International Tropical Timber Organization for a subprogramme covering seven out of its 14 participating countries. Other notable examples from Asia and the Pacific include the various programmes on poverty reduction and community forestry initiated by regional organizations such as the Asia Forest Partnership and the Asia Forest Network. Increasingly, the secretariat of the Pacific Community has assisted many Pacific island nations to participate effectively in regional and international forums by mobilizing resources and building capacity.

26. Regional and subregional forest information promotion initiatives and research networks have been established to strengthen research capacities and to promote collaboration and the efficient provision and sharing of relevant information, with the overall goal of strengthening science-policy interaction for sustainable forest management. The Forestry Research Network for Sub-Saharan Africa, the African Forestry Research Network, the Biodiversity International forest genetic resources network, in Africa; and the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme established by Biodiversity International and APAFRI and currently hosted by APAFRI, in Asia and the Pacific, are but a few examples of regional forest research-related networks. The Association of Forestry Research Institutions in Eastern Africa, the Forestry and Agro-forestry Research Network of the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (in West and Central Africa), and the Forestry Research and Training Unit of the Southern African Development Community, are outstanding examples of subregional forest research networks. The GFIS Africa Project initiated by IUFRO, which is contributing to enhancing access to and provision of quality forest-related information, especially information available through electronic media, is another outstanding initiative with five well-established eco-regional information centres strategically located throughout Africa. APAFRI, assisted by CIFOR, is in the initial stages of developing GFIS Asia.

27. At the national level, a number of initiatives have been emerging in recent years, mainly through partnership with the National Forestry Programme Facility hosted by FAO. Indeed, in line with United Nations Forum on Forests recommendations to encourage increased multi-stakeholder participation in sustainable forest management, the National Forestry Programme Facility has successfully mobilized the participation of civil society organizations and local communities and individuals in forest policy formulation and implementation in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Ghana, for example, through the partnership with the National Forestry Programme Facility, forest forums are being established enthusiastically in each of the 10 administrative regions of the country. The main objective of the forums is to allow the National Forestry Commission to cast its net wider in seeking relevant information for forest policy formulation and implementation. Likewise, in Nigeria, through partnership with the National Forestry Programme Facility, five studies of the ecological zones of the country are

currently under way. The main purpose of the partnership established between Nigeria and the National Forest Programme Facility is to strengthen the participation of local people and communities in sustainable forest management, and promote community-based forest management as a policy strategy to achieve sustainable forest management. Similar actions are being undertaken in Asia and Latin America.

IV. Recommendations for non-legally binding instruments on forests

28. Science and technology constitute a major asset which when properly developed and utilized can play a vital role in the formulation and implementation of forest policy for sustainable forest management. That has already been recognized both by Agenda 21 (chapters 31 and 35) and by the United Nations Forum on Forests, including through the inclusion of forest-related scientific knowledge in the agenda of a number of its previous sessions.

29. However, future international agreements and arrangements need to go beyond recognizing the importance of science and technology, and seriously consider ways to enhance the interface between science and policy, to support the greater extension and adoption of research results, to facilitate research capacity-building and to mobilize funding for research in order to unlock the potential for scientific information and appropriate technologies to contribute to sustainable development. The following suggestions are ways for future international arrangements on forests to better address those urgent proposals:

(a) Joint initiatives on science and technology should be supported to strengthen the contribution of research to more informed decision-making at the global level;

(b) The application of scientific and technological innovations, as well as traditional forest-related knowledge, should be supported to help indigenous and local communities undertake sustainable forest management;

(c) Innovative ways should be found to reduce the debt burden of developing countries so as to channel funds into the sustainable management of natural resources including scientific knowledge development as a viable way of supporting the process;

(d) Donor interest in collaborative initiatives should be increased, which could help advance implementation of the urgent proposals through effective flows of information at all levels of decision-making, especially to increase the awareness of policymakers, landowners, communities and representatives outside the forest sector.

30. The scientific and technological communities major group wishes to stress that for the proposed non-legally binding instrument on forests to be comprehensive and effective, it should also address the following additional issues, which are equally important for the science-policy interface, especially in developing countries:

(a) Supporting and improving training programmes in developing countries so that emerging issues and challenges, such as conflict resolution, dialogue between forest stakeholders, including dialogue between forest scientists,

administrators and donors, intersectoral linkages and participatory approaches to address sustainability issues, can be properly addressed;

(b) Supporting and promoting dynamic networking and collaboration between subregional, regional and international forestry training and research institutions as a powerful way to mitigate not only capacity constraints, but also unproductive competition for financial resources, which does not always allow for the best use of resources, and to obtain far-reaching results in addressing global problems of a subregional, regional and international nature;

(c) Empowering and building capacity of local people, communities and authorities to effectively participate in sustainable forest management and perform the new and challenging roles they have to play in the decentralization process gaining momentum in the developing world.

31. Indeed, if research capacities are strengthened and funds for forest research mobilized adequately, then there will be a greater chance to address effectively and in a timely fashion the knowledge gaps and set research priorities. In turn, that will contribute to improving linkages between science and policy processes; promoting the efficient sharing of information and strengthening of networks; and applying participatory mechanisms to integrate research into planning processes.

V. Recommendations for the multi-year programme of work

32. The scientific and technological communities major group supports the decision of the sixth session of United Nations Forum on Forests that, following its seventh session in 2007, the Forum shall meet biennially for a period of up to two weeks. Furthermore, the scientific and technological communities major group wishes to propose that:

(a) During each session, time slots be allocated for specific thematic panel discussions or dialogues of multinational interest on issues of major concern to the Forum, in order to share and exchange existing information, including traditional forest-related knowledge, and to identify knowledge gaps and additional information needs;

(b) During each session, time slots also be allocated for addressing cross-cutting issues, such as funding for implementing elements of the non-legally binding instrument;

(c) During the years when the United Nations Forum on Forests does not meet, regional events be organized to address region-specific issues with global impacts, or lessons learned from the regional implementation of international initiatives; the scientific community should be invited to contribute to those regional events.

33. Bearing in mind that other international agencies, such as FAO, have regional offices or commissions that organize regular regional events, events during the intersessional years could best be organized in conjunction with those regional offices or commissions. That would avoid undesirable duplication and diluting scarce resources, which often results in unfocused, inconclusive and at times disastrous outcomes.

34. Finally, the scientific and technological communities major group would like to suggest that:

(a) **The multi-year programme of work focus on a limited number of practical and concrete activities in line with the constraints limiting progress towards sustainable forest management in general and the achievement of the four global objectives defined for the non-legally binding instrument;**

(b) **For each of the activities identified, practical modalities for effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation be carefully defined in order to facilitate assessment of progress and impacts.**

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

35. Achieving sustainable management of the world's forests and forest resources is certainly one of the greatest challenges facing the world today. If the international community holds that truth to be self-evident, then courageous action should be taken as a result, including bringing scientific and technological knowledge to bear to face the challenge. The international community should consider drastic recommendations, including putting real power and commitment behind the proposed elements of the non-legally binding instrument in order to facilitate their implementation. With regard to the proposals for action related to science and technology, it is recommended that:

(a) **A commitment be made to investing in strengthening forest research capacities and supporting research networks and activities, in particular in economically disadvantaged countries, so that science and research can make a difference to real-life problems through the timely delivery of utilizable science-based solutions;**

(b) **Appropriate support from Governments and members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other international organizations be mobilized to assist regional and subregional forest research networks involved in building forest research capacities, improving communications, information-sharing and networking among forest scientists, research institutions, universities, policymakers, local communities and other stakeholders in the forest sector and other land-based sectors.**